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ABSTRACT

This practicum focused on the problem of inservice training failing to meet the individual professional needs of a diverse summer staff in an early childhood center. The solution strategy utilized a needs assessment survey and consultations with staff members to determine areas of need and interest, the results of which were used to devise a series of three inservice meetings. Choices were built into the sessions to permit staff to select topics according to needs, interests, and learning styles. New staff were paired with peer-mentors to provide information and support on a continuing basis, and all staff were encouraged to pursue individual goals. Results of a post-test survey indicated that most of the staff were either moderately or very satisfied with the program. Although experienced teachers did pursue individual goals, the level of achievement varied greatly. Five appendixes provide copies of the inservice training needs assessment, inservice evaluation questionnaire, contents of the inservice manual, and schedules and descriptions of the inservice training sessions. (MDM)

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Improving Inservice Training for Summer Staff in an Early Childhood Center Through Individual Professional Development Goals and Ongoing Training

by

Candace Olin Kroehl

Cluster 50

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A Practicum I Report Presented to the
Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies
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for the Degree of Doctor of Education

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PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

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Approved:

9 November 1993

Date of Final Approval of Report

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ABSTRACT

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This practicum focused on the problem of inservice training failing to meet the individual professional needs of a diverse summer staff in an early childhood center. The goal of the practicum was to improve inservice training to meet individual needs. An expected outcome was that new and seasonal staff would express satisfaction with information provided through inservice about relevant topics. Another expectation was that experienced teachers would select an individual professional growth goal, devise a plan to achieve it and evaluate progress toward accomplishing the goal. A third expectation was that staff would express satisfaction with the level of teamwork among the staff.

The solution strategy utilized a needs assessment survey and consultation with staff to determine areas of need and interest. This input was used to devise a series of inservice meetings. Choices were built into the sessions to permit staff to select according to needs, interest and learning styles. New staff were paired with peer-mentors to provide information and support on a continuing basis. Staff were encouraged to pursue individual goals.

Results indicated that most of the staff were either moderately or very satisfied with the information provided through inservice. Experienced teachers did pursue individual goals, although the levels of achievement varied greatly. Most of the staff reported that they were either moderately or very satisfied with the level of teamwork.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of Community

The writer's community is in a medium sized midwestern city, several miles from the downtown business district. The immediate vicinity is predominantly residential, with homes ranging from economical apartment complexes to expensive single family homes. The section with a high density of apartments attracts singles, low income families and recent Russian immigrants. The areas of single family homes are established neighborhoods. The higher priced sectors are being revitalized with an influx of young families and the remodeling and enlarging of many houses. Other residential areas with more modestly priced homes are well-kept and attractive to families. Commercial and public services are nearby and the area is on main bus routes. The community is close to major cultural, educational and medical facilities.

Writer's Work Setting and Role

The work setting is an early childhood center within a large nonprofit sectarian community agency. The agency provides educational and recreational programs for young children through senior citizens. The agency serves both families from the surrounding community and families from throughout the metropolitan area who are affiliated with the religious denomination represented by the agency.

The early childhood center offers educational and extended care programs throughout the year. It is a licensed facility which serves approximately 175 children, 2.5 through 6 years of age. The children are from diverse backgrounds, including children from upper income families, low income families and recent Russian immigrants.

The center operates full and half day preschool and kindergarten programs, with extended care available for early mornings and late afternoons. During the school year, September through May, 4 of 12 morning classes and all afternoon classes except the kindergarten are mixed-age groups. During the summer program all except two groups are mixed ages.

The early childhood center has a staff of 28 to 32 teachers and assistants. The variation depends on the numbers of full and part time employees. Some of the staff work throughout the year, while others work only the school

year. Seven head teachers and 10 assistants who were employed during the school year continued to work with the summer program. Seasonal workers were employed June through August to complete staffing for summer programs. Five of the seasonal employees were returnees who have worked one or more previous summers at the center.

Minimum qualifications for child care workers, as stipulated by State regulations, do not require that all child care workers have preservice training in early childhood education. Head teachers need a 2- or 4-year degree, a Child Development Associate credential, 3 years experience or a combination of experience and college courses. No experience or education in early childhood studies is required for beginning assistants. Kindergarten teachers must have either a teaching certificate or meet director qualifications.

The qualifications of the staff at the center are diverse. Eleven of 14 head teachers and 8 of 17 assistants on staff had a 4-year degree in education or a related field. The kindergarten teacher has a teaching certificate. The range of experience for teachers and assistants is from less than 1 year to more than 15 years. Three of the assistant teachers are recent Russian immigrants who have had no training in the United States, although two had worked with children prior to emigrating. Seasonal

employees had at least a high school diploma and some experience with children. Two summer employees work in public school early childhood programs and one works with a Head Start program during the school year.

The writer is director of early childhood education programs for the agency. Responsibilities include all aspects of planning and supervising the early childhood programs. This includes interviewing, hiring and supervising staff; developing new programming; and planning and conducting staff training and development.

The writer's qualifications exceed state requirements for a director of a preschool and child care center. The writer has a B.S. in Human Development and Family Studies, an M.A. in Special Education and additional graduate studies in education. The writer has been director for 2 years and had previously been a head teacher and coordinator for extended day care at the center.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

The summer staff of the early childhood center was a diversified group with a broad range of levels of experience and education (see Tables 1 and 2). Some of the summer staff work at the center throughout the year while others worked only the summer months. Five of 12 head teachers and 6 of 16 assistants were summer employees.

In past years, summer inservice included introductions of all staff; a description of program objectives; administrative information concerning schedules, staff and room assignments; a review of emergency and safety procedures; and input on planning activities. In addition, one or two topics were emphasized through special presentations on subjects such as developmentally appropriate practice or outdoor activities for young children. All summer staff participated in the inservice sessions. This structured approach of presenting predetermined information did not encourage professional

Table 1

Level of Training of Summer Staff

	Head Teachers n=12	Assistants n=16
Relevant 4-year degree	4	1
CDA	1	
Some relevant course work	4	2
Inservice training only	3	4
No training		9

Table 2

Years of Experience of Summer Staff

	Head Teachers n=12	Assistants n=16
5 or more years	2	2
1 to 3 years	5	3
Less than 1 year	5	11

growth for all staff. New and seasonal employees did not receive sufficient information to be adequately prepared for responsibilities. Experienced staff did not have options to select topics which would be individually meaningful and expand skills. In addition, the inservice training did not foster integration of new and seasonal staff with continuing year round staff into teams who worked effectively together.

The problem had not been solved previously because the situation had not been evaluated. The same inservice format had been used repeatedly without analyzing whether the information was needed or effectively conveyed to the staff. Decisions on training had been made by the administrative staff without input from the teaching staff.

The problem was that inservice training was not fulfilling the individual professional development needs of a diverse summer staff in an early childhood center.

Problem Documentation

The existence of the problem was supported by responses to an Inservice Needs Assessment questionnaire (see Appendix A). Seventeen returning or continuing staff completed the questionnaire during February and March, 1993. Table 3 reports staff responses to the questionnaire.

Of nine new or seasonal staff who responded to the Needs Assessment, four to six individuals indicated a desire

Table 3

Responses to Summer Inservice Training Needs Assessment

	New/Seasonal n=9	Experienced n=8	Total n=17
Topics	Number of responses		
Judaic curriculum	6	6	12
Developmentally appropriate activity planning	5	2	7
Positive discipline	5	2	7
Orientation to job and center	4	2	6
Staff team building	4	3	7
Field trip planning	4	1	5

for more information on Judaic curriculum, developmentally appropriate activity planning, positive discipline, orientation to job responsibilities and the center, team building and field trips. None of eight experienced staff who responded to the Needs Assessment had been asked to select a personal professional growth goal, to develop a plan to achieve it, and to work toward accomplishing the goal. Seven of 17 respondents to the Needs Assessment reported a desire for inservice to include an increased Staff Team Building component.

Causative Analysis

There were several probable causes of the problem of inservice not meeting the individual needs of the staff. The first was that staff had not been asked what their needs were and what would be relevant training. Needs assessment surveys had not been conducted and staff had not been involved in planning inservice training. Inservice had been planned and conducted by the administrative staff without input from teachers and assistants.

Another causative factor of the inadequacy of inservice training was that continuing year round staff were more familiar with the center's procedures than were new or seasonal personnel. Although procedures such as steps to follow in emergencies or how to schedule cooking projects and requisition supplies were reviewed, this information was familiar to employees who had been with the center for a period of time but was crucial input for new employees. It was sometimes difficult for new staff to assimilate all the information presented within a short span of time. Frequently, new staff had many questions about material presented at inservice sessions during the following days and weeks.

The lack of opportunities for new and seasonal staff to become well acquainted with full time staff and develop working team relationships was another probable cause of

inservice not meeting individual needs. An informal potluck supper was included in an inservice session, but an ongoing team building component was not incorporated into inservice programming.

An important contributing factor to the inadequacy of inservice was the diversity of previous experience and education of the staff. Summer personnel had from less than 1 year of experience and no training to more than 15 years of experience and 4-year degrees in relevant study areas (see Tables 4 and 5). The professional growth needs of such a disparate group would necessarily vary greatly and one uniform training session could not meet all these individual needs.

Another probable cause of the problem was that adults have a variety of learning styles and motivations for learning. One standard presentation does not provide the alternatives required for each individual to learn in an appropriate manner. However, no alternatives were offered.

One other probable cause of the problem was that inservice had been conducted in three sessions at the beginning of the summer program without any follow-up. Ongoing inservice was not provided. A lack of continuous training was likely to have contributed to the lack of integration of the staff and to new staff lacking familiarity with functional aspects of the center.

Table 4

Level of Training of Respondents

	Head Teachers n=12	Assistants n=5
Relevant 4-year degree	4	
CDA	1	
Some relevant college work	5	1
Inservice training only	2	4

Table 5

Years of Experience of Respondents

	Head Teachers n=12	Assistants n=5
5 or more years	3	1
1 to 3 years	6	3
Less than 1 year	3	1

All of these factors appeared to contribute to causing the problem of the inadequacy of inservice training in meeting individual staff needs. Informal feedback from teachers during an evaluation of the previous summer program suggested that new personnel had not been adequately prepared for responsibilities and sufficiently integrated into the staff. Responses to the Summer Inservice Training Needs Assessment indicated that many of the staff desired more information on a variety of topics (see Table 3), but each person's list varied from others.

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

A review of the literature supported the existence of the problem of a need for improved training for early childhood workers. Several authors (Copple, 1991; Jorde-Bloom & Sheerer, 1992; Zigler & Lang, 1991) indicated that child care workers have inadequate training. Copple reported that more than one third of child care workers do not have any training in early childhood education. Jorde-Bloom and Sheerer commented, "Unfortunately, political and economic realities work against the creation of a well-prepared child care work force" (p.580). Studies (Copple, 1991; Jorde-Bloom & Sheerer, 1992; Whitebook, Howes, Phillips, & Pemberton, 1989) suggested that poor pay and work conditions create high turnover in the field,

resulting in lose of qualified staff and high numbers of inexperienced workers who require training. According to the National Child Care Staffing Study the level of education and training of staff is associated with quality of care (Whitebook et al., 1989). Therefore, improving training opportunities is a legitimate concern.

Other studies suggested that inservice training may not meet the needs of the target population. Wood and Thompson (1980) reported that studies indicated teachers were not satisfied with inservice training. They concluded that causes of dissatisfaction were related to lack of needs assessment and lack of relevancy to staff needs. Other writers (Massey, 1978; Varah & Hallman, 1989) suggested that inservice training has not been successful because training was not based on principles of adult learning. Rosenholtz (1991) observed that inservice training was ineffective when it was not related to problem-solving teacher concerns.

The importance of considering individual differences has been reviewed in the literature. Jorde-Bloom (1989) found statistically significant differences between teachers and assistants on measures of educational levels, experience in the field, professional orientation and commitment. Arnett (1989) indicated that teachers with different levels of training respond differently to children and had different attitudes, suggesting that staff may have

differing professional growth needs. Other authors (Arends, Hersh, & Turner, 1980; Katz, 1972) suggested that beginning and experienced teachers have different needs. Katz hypothesized that teachers progress through several stages and that professional development needs are different in each stage.

The effects of organization and presentation of inservice have been explored. Arends et al. (1980) pointed out that teachers have not been active in the development and presentation of inservice. Abbott-Shim (1990) and Rosenholtz (1991) indicated that single training sessions frequently are not effective. Hall and Loucks (1978) concurred and suggested that staff development is a change process.

One other relevant area that has received attention is the effects of organizational climate. Jorde-Bloom (1988a) indicated that personnel problems such as high staff turnover and low morale are related to organizational climate, of which several dimensions are professional growth, collegiality, decision making, clarity, goal consensus and task orientation. Arends et al. (1980) stressed the significance of organizational climate. Attention to organizational climate is relevant to the need for staff team building and professional development.

The problem of inadequate staff training for early

childhood workers was well documented in the literature. Several factors which contribute to ineffective staff inservice were discussed. The evidence presented substantiated the existence of the problem.

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Goals and Expectations

The following goals and outcomes were projected for this practicum.

The goal of the project is to improve summer inservice training to meet the individual professional development needs of a diverse staff. The expectations are that new and seasonal staff will be adequately prepared for job responsibilities, experienced staff will realize professional growth and staff will develop teamwork.

Expected Outcomes

Several outcomes were expected following implementation. The first one is that new and seasonal staff will report satisfaction with information provided through inservice about Judaic curriculum, developmentally appropriate activity planning, positive discipline, orientation to job responsibilities and to the center, team building and field trips. Evaluation will be assessed by

responses to a self-report questionnaire (see Appendix B) completed at the end of the implementation period. Staff will indicate the degree of satisfaction with information provided through inservice. The standard of achievement will be seven of nine new or seasonal staff will report satisfaction.

Another outcome will be that experienced staff will select a personal professional growth goal, develop a plan to achieve the goal and do a self-evaluation of progress toward accomplishment of the goal. The evaluation tool will be a written plan stating the goal, the steps to be taken in working toward it, and a self-evaluation of progress. The standard of achievement will be five of eight experienced staff will complete the written plan and self-evaluation.

A third outcome will be that staff will report satisfaction with the level of staff teamwork at the end of the implementation phase. The evaluation tool will be a questionnaire on which staff will report degree of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the level of staff teamwork. The standard of achievement will be 15 of 17 staff will report satisfaction.

Measurement of Outcomes

At the end of the implementation period participants completed a written evaluation of inservice (see Appendix

B). The first part asked for responses on a 4-point scale, indicating degree of satisfaction, from very satisfied to very dissatisfied, with information provided during inservice and with level of staff teamwork. The second part of the survey asked staff to respond to open-ended questions about what aspects of inservice had been most and least helpful, and what changes could be suggested. This written evaluation format had been selected since self reports had been noted in the literature (Jorde-Bloom & Sheerer, 1992) as an efficacious technique for evaluating the effectiveness of staff development programs. Open-ended questions permitted the respondents to provide additional comments.

The second measurement of outcome was a written plan submitted to the director by experienced staff. The plan was to state the individual's personal professional growth goal, the steps taken to achieve the goal and a statement evaluating progress made toward accomplishing it. Since this was an individualized approach, the expectation was that each plan would be different. However, each plan should contain the three required components. This approach was selected as a means for the evaluation to reflect the goal of individualized professional development. Consultations with the director to discuss individual plans were conducted.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions

Possible Solution Strategies

The problem was that inservice training was not fulfilling the professional development needs of summer staff in an early childhood education center. New and seasonal staff had been inadequately prepared for responsibilities. Experienced staff had not had the opportunity for continued professional development. Summer staff and continuing staff had not integrated into a team who worked well together.

A review of the literature suggested a number of solution strategies. Many authors (Hall & Loucks, 1978; Hegland, 1984; Jones, 1993a; Jorde-Bloom, 1988a; Jorde-Bloom, Sheerer, & Britz, 1991; Katz, 1972; Vartuli & Fyfe, 1993) emphasized that effective inservice training is responsive to the individual needs of staff who may be in different developmental stages. Others (Arends et al., 1980; Ovando, 1990; Varah & Hallman, 1989; Wood & Thompson,

1980) suggested that training should be based on each individual's current level of knowledge and relate to problems encountered on the job. Ovando advocated an individualized approach to inservice training utilizing Individualized Learning Modules, self-directed units containing learning options. She asserted that as professionals teachers can direct and evaluate their own learning.

Evaluating needs, knowledge and experience were mentioned frequently as an essential element of effective staff development programs. Abbott-Shim (1990) recommended needs assessment surveys as an evaluation method. Arends et al. (1980) commented that evaluation of needs is an important process but suggested that a needs assessment survey has limited usefulness. Arends et al. stated, "It is a finite solution to a problem that is more often infinite. The needs assessment concept should become as infinite as the problem being diagnosed, that is, more qualitative, interactive, and personalized" (p. 17). They recommended an individualized consultation model to assess needs. Jorde-Bloom et al. (1991), also, utilized an individualized assessment approach.

Components suggested by Abbott-Shim (1990) to increase effectiveness of inservice included continuous training and follow-up. A study of stages of concern by Hall and Loucks

(1978) suggested that a follow-up component to workshops is needed since training is a change process of introducing innovations. Several authors (Arends et al., 1980; Cook, 1982; Wood & Thompson, 1980) recommended involving teachers actively in planning and conducting training. Additional recommendations were to use role playing and simulation activities to provide opportunities to practice new skills (Arends et al., 1980; Joyce & Showers, 1980; Wood & Thompson, 1980). Wood and Thompson reported that staff training based on experiential learning had been effectively demonstrated in school based programs.

Other authors concentrated on incorporating strategies based on adult learning theory. Jones (1986) and others (Bierly & Berliner, 1982; Wood & Thompson, 1980) recommended providing choices of activities and options in learning techniques. Jones (1993a) suggested, "Choice is a crucial component in enabling teachers to take responsibility for their own growth. Making choices is an empowering process" (p. xiv). Jones (1993a) and Jorde-Bloom and Sheerer (1992) indicated that those working with adult learners should be facilitators, assisting rather than directing the learning process. These authors emphasized the importance of reflection in the learning process, for teachers to reflect on experiences and incorporate meaning which can be applied in other situations. Jorde-Bloom and Sheerer reported that

training based on this kind of approach increased the perceived level of competence of participants. The authors, also, observed increased quality of care after training.

The use of peers as mentors and as a source of support was another solution strategy discussed in the literature (Arends et al., 1980; Decker & Dedrick, 1989; Jorde-Bloom, 1988b; Lambert, 1985; Little, 1982; Wood & Thompson, 1980). Decker and Dedrick reported that teachers indicated that other teachers were most qualified to assist in the learning of new skills.

Another idea for a solution strategy was to provide staff with a manual of essential information. The manual could include introductory information on school philosophy and program objectives, emergency and safety procedures, job responsibilities, schedules and basic concepts of developmentally appropriate practice. The manual could be an easy reference guide when questions occur. Another possibility was to have each individual select a personally relevant goal and develop a plan to achieve it.

Evaluation of Solution Strategies

Throughout the literature, the importance of focusing on the individual was stressed. The early childhood center staff is a diversified group in regard to experience and relevant education. Providing staff with options for inservice training could be a viable strategy. Although

Ovando's (1990) proposal of Individualized Learning Modules would be one way to provide training choices, this was not a feasible solution for the time frame of this practicum. The development of such learning units would be a lengthy project. Commercial packets which had the necessary qualities might be available, but purchasing an extensive library of resources was not budgeted at this time. Therefore, the time and resources needed to pursue this option were beyond the scope of this project.

Investigating individual needs and preferences for training was considered to be a feasible solution strategy. A needs assessment survey (see Appendix A) was administered to staff to provide evidence of the problem. The information collected was used in the planning of inservice. Additional information could be collected by assessing perceived levels of knowledge as described by Jorde-Bloom and Sheerer (1992). The developmental stages of staff can be considered in planning since information about levels of education and experience is available to the writer. Application of the concept of an individualized consultation approach, as recommended by Arends et al. (1980), could be possible within the work setting. Jorde-Bloom et al. (1991) described a comprehensive model which includes global assessment of the organizational environment as well as individual assessment and goal setting using consultation as

part of the process. Additional ideas which could be incorporated into inservice programming are an experiential, problem-solving approach; choices of activities and learning techniques; and fostering a self-directed approach to professional growth.

Another workable strategy which could be pursued was ongoing inservice rather than one time workshops. This could be instituted without fiscal impact. The additional time commitment that would be necessary could be manageable, especially if more experienced staff are involved in working with less experienced staff. Research supported the use of peers as coaches or mentors (Decker & Dedrick, 1989). Little (1982) commented, "Continuous professional development appears to be most surely and thoroughly achieved when: Teachers engage in frequent, continuous and increasingly concrete and precise talk about teaching practice" (p. 331). Little's study suggested that staff development appeared to be most successful in schools where collegiality, working together, was the norm.

Description of Selected Solution

Most of the solutions which have been reviewed could be adapted to the writer's work setting, meeting criteria of appropriateness for the population and within the available resources. However, the most suitable solution strategy

seemed to be an approach which combined elements from several ideas.

The solution strategy the writer implemented included using information from the needs assessment survey and involving staff in planning and conducting inservice as a way to enhance the relevancy of training. In addition, options were offered during some of the group sessions to accommodate differences in experience, knowledge and learning styles. This was in accordance with the goal of improving inservice to meet the needs of all staff.

The writer prepared an inservice manual with concrete information which all staff should know. The manual was distributed to all staff to serve as a resource. The purpose of the manual was to provide all workers, especially new and seasonal personnel, with the basic information that was required to effectively perform job responsibilities.

New and seasonal staff were matched with full time staff as peer-mentors. This solution strategy had a dual purpose. One related to the objective of providing adequate information for new staff. The second purpose was to foster integration of new and seasonal personnel with continuing full time staff and to encourage team building.

Another strategy which was implemented was to encourage staff to pursue a personal professional development goal. One uniform inservice training program could not meet the

needs of a diverse group. An individualized approach permitted participants to be self-directed toward a goal that met personal needs.

The final component of the solution strategy was to include follow-up which continued throughout the implementation phase. The literature review indicated that continuous training is more effective than single workshops. This aspect of the solution included fostering a continuing relationship between mentors and new and seasonal staff as a way to promote both staff development and teamwork. According to Little (1982) staff development is fostered in an atmosphere of collegiality.

Report of Action Taken

The planned implementation period of the practicum was twelve weeks. The first step was to review the information gathered through the needs assessment survey (See Appendix A) and consult with staff members to determine a format for inservice programs and topics which would be most worthwhile to all staff. Experienced staff commented favorably about including options so that everyone would not have to participate in presentations of basic information. However, to insure that all had the same core of information about job responsibilities, program philosophy, schedules and procedures a manual was compiled and given to all staff,

both new and experienced (See Appendix C). Not only did this provide the same information to everyone, but served as a continuing reference when questions arose. The manuals were constructed so that pages could be added and staff were encouraged to put additional training information that was shared during the summer into the manuals.

The input from the needs assessment and consultations with staff was used to plan three initial inservice sessions (See Appendix D). Some of the activities included all staff with the goal of everyone getting acquainted and developing a rapport on which team building could develop. Other activities were small group options in which choices could be based on individual training needs. However, new and inexperienced staff were required to attend sessions which presented basic essential information. Jones (1993a) had commented on the legitimacy of requiring the learning of minimum competencies, and distinguished between this type of compliance goal and goals of individual initiative. Two experienced staff members conducted a session on orientation to the center, job responsibilities and essential procedures for new and inexperienced personnel. Other options offered included presentations by a Judaic curriculum consultant and a psychologist, training video tapes and brainstorming sessions. Personal goal setting and peer-mentoring were discussed during the sessions, and each individual was asked

to submit three names of possible choices for peer-mentor matches. In addition, resource books on developmentally appropriate practice and curriculum were available for staff to borrow. A summary of the sessions was distributed to all staff (See Appendix E).

Each staff member was matched with another to form peer-mentor pairs. The criteria used was to have each new or seasonal individual matched with an experienced staff person with priority given to stated choices. By basing matches on personal preferences it was hoped that individuals would feel comfortable with one another, be willing to seek and accept advise and provide encouragement and support. Experienced staff were asked to check with peer matches regularly to ascertain how the job was progressing and if any help or information was needed.

By the third week the writer began individual conferences with staff to consult about personal goal setting and plans to achieve goals. The peer-mentoring process, also, was discussed. These conferences were an ongoing part of the implementation process. The continuing consultations about personal goals were the most difficult aspect of the project. During these conferences the writer tried to act as a facilitator. However, the writer experienced some of the pitfalls described by Jones (1993a) when the administrator rather than an external person takes

the role of facilitator. The writer met with resistance by a few individuals. Although some teachers defined goals early in the process, others took many weeks to formulate a written plan, seeming to view the process as one more requirement to fit into already busy schedules.

During the fourth week, an inservice meeting was held for those staff who worked in the late afternoon extended day care program. This was scheduled to provide additional training related to specific areas of concern which had arisen since the initial training sessions. Most of these workers were inexperienced or seasonal employees. The session was planned by the afternoon head teachers and assistant director, with input from the writer and other afternoon staff. Specific concerns about playground coverage and activities, consistency among staff in working with a child with special needs, and team work were discussed. Ideas for improvements were brainstormed and strategies were selected. A videotape on guidance techniques (Jones, 1988b) was available for viewing.

The following week a similar training meeting was conducted with the morning extended day care staff. It was presided over by the morning head teacher and the assistant director. Concerns among this group were comparable to those that had been discussed at the previous meeting.

Midway through the implementation period, staff were

asked for their evaluation of the inservice program. This feedback, and that given during consultations, provided direction for planning an additional inservice session for all staff. This session began with a pot luck supper which allowed staff to interact informally, followed by designated time for staff to share curriculum ideas with one another. The evening concluded with a presentation on inclusion by a psychologist who specializes in working with children with special needs. The evening had been structured to provide both positive staff interaction and relevant information.

Throughout the implementation period all staff received weekly written updates. These listed dates and times of events, meetings, and field trips; reminders about procedures; positive comments about staff effectiveness and the summer program; and attachments of reprints of articles or additional information on topics of interest. These updates were used to supplement, not replace, personal contact and to provide written information as a form of continuing follow-up.

At the conclusion of the implementation period, staff were asked to complete an Inservice Evaluation Questionnaire (See Appendix B). Those staff who had defined personal professional growth goals and plans of action were asked to evaluate the progress made toward achieving the goal.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results

The problem which was the focus of this practicum was that inservice was not fulfilling the professional needs of a summer child care center staff who had diverse training and experience. Some of the staff were employed throughout the year while others were seasonal workers. Some had years of experience and relevant education; others were inexperienced with limited training. In addition, this mix of staff seemed to lack cohesiveness and team work.

The solution strategy which was implemented utilized a needs assessment survey and consultations with staff to identify topics of interest and those areas in which more information was required. An ongoing summer inservice program was developed based on the gathered input. The program was comprised of several sessions which offered training options, peer-mentor pairings of staff, and selection of personal professional growth goals by experienced staff. Follow-up was provided during the

implementation through consultations with staff, contacts by peer-mentors, and through information disseminated in written updates.

One expected outcome was that seven of nine new or seasonal staff would report satisfaction with information provided through inservice about Judaic curriculum, developmentally appropriate activity planning, positive discipline, orientation to job responsibilities and to the center, team building and field trips. The assessment of satisfaction was based on responses to a self-report questionnaire (See Appendix B). The results indicated that for each of the topics except for field trips, at least seven were moderately or very satisfied with information provided through inservice (See Table 6). The number of new or seasonal staff who were very satisfied varied from three, for field trips, to seven for orientation to job and center.

The second expected outcome was that five of eight experienced staff would select a personal professional growth goal, develop a plan to achieve the goal and complete a self-evaluation of progress made toward accomplishing the goal. All eight experienced staff selected a goal, developed a written plan, and evaluated progress toward achieving the goal.

The third expected outcome was that 15 of 17 staff would report satisfaction with the level of staff teamwork,

Table 6

Outcome 1: Level of Satisfaction of New and/or Seasonal Staff

Topics	Very Dissatisfied (1)	Moderately Dissatisfied (2)	Moderately Satisfied (3)	Very Satisfied (4)
	Number of responses = 9			
Judaic curriculum	0	1	3	5
Developmentally appropriate activity planning	0	1	3	5
Positive discipline	0	0	3	6
Orientation to job and center	0	1	1	7
Staff team building	1	0	4	4
Field trip planning*	0	1	2	3

* Three individuals did not respond to this item as they chose not to participate in this aspect of inservice training since the groups with which they worked did not go on field trips.

as indicated on the evaluation questionnaire. Fifteen of 17 staff reported that they were either moderately or very satisfied with the level of staff teamwork. Six of the staff reported that they were very satisfied. One individual responded that she was very dissatisfied, and one did not complete this item on the questionnaire.

Discussion

The practicum achieved most of the expected outcomes. The stated standard was not reached in only one area, satisfaction with information about field trips. In this case, five new or seasonal staff were moderately or very satisfied and one was moderately dissatisfied. However, three individuals indicated that this item on the questionnaire was not applicable because they worked with groups who did not go on trips. Therefore, these workers chose not to attend the sessions on this topic as it was not relevant to them. The failure to achieve the projected standard appears to be the consequence of unrealistic expectations rather than a problem with the inservice program since the practicum goal was to develop inservice training which was responsive to each individual's needs.

The results for the other topics in which satisfaction of new or seasonal staff was evaluated indicated that only one worker was dissatisfied for each of four of the topics and no one was dissatisfied with information about positive discipline (See Table 6). Although these results suggest that the approach to inservice which was utilized was effective, more could be done to enhance levels of satisfaction, as indicated by the range of three to seven individuals who were very satisfied, from the total of nine respondents.

Feedback during the first half of the intervention period indicated that many staff felt that concrete ideas and activity suggestions were the most useful aspect of inservice training. One new staff member commented, "It would be helpful for new staff to hear some of the veterans describe one or two of their most successful activities and why it worked." This was compatible with findings in the literature. Pofahl and Potaracke (1983) reported that child care staff had a high degree of interest in training about techniques and materials. Decker and Dedrick (1989) indicated that teachers suggested other teachers were best qualified to provide training. This area of interest was used as one focus of the mid-summer inservice session for all staff. Everyone was asked to bring an activity idea to demonstrate and share. It resulted in individuals gaining fresh program ideas in an atmosphere of positive staff interaction.

Small group sessions were conducted for extended day staff in response to specific concerns and problems. Jorde-Bloom (1988a) commented, "Good staff development-designed to solve practical problems and to meet the needs of different types of teachers-is important for two reasons. It contributes to the quality of teaching and it increases professional satisfaction" (p. 6).

Another aspect of inservice which received positive

comments was the availability of choices. Experienced staff expressed appreciation for not having to sit through sessions on basic information and procedures. The importance of choices to meet different needs was emphasized by a several authors (Jones, 1993a; Jorde-Bloom et al., 1991; Vartuli & Fyfe, 1993).

The expected outcome of staff pursuing personal professional growth goals was achieved in the context of staff selecting goals, developing a plan, and evaluating progress since all eight experienced staff did fulfill these steps. However, the extent to which progress was achieved toward goals varied. Jones (1993a) commented, "When teachers make choices some will grow more than others" (p. xv). Some of the staff actively worked on selected goals while others had difficulty defining goals, even with discussion and consultation, and some individuals seemed disinterested and postponed selection of goals until late in the implementation period.

The personal goals which were selected demonstrated a diversity of professional needs. One individual chose to work on improved parent communication and increased parent participation. Throughout the summer, this teacher displayed an ongoing parent information bulletin board in her classroom, sent letters home weekly, and achieved a high level of parent involvement in the program. Another teacher

chose to work on improving the classroom environment and atmosphere. She used structural changes such as restricting the number of children in each center as a means of providing limits and fostering a positive climate in the classroom. This individual's self-critique suggested that she felt she had made progress toward the goal, but was continuing to work on it. Another staff member chose to increase her knowledge of Judaic curriculum. She, too, indicated that she had made progress toward this goal, and attributed her success to the help of other staff members.

Another experienced worker chose to expand her repertoire of developmentally appropriate center activities. Early in the implementation period, this individual appeared to be enthusiastic about pursuing her goal and consultations seemed to be helpful in providing direction. However, during the summer the teacher decided to return to college full time in the fall, although she did remain to complete the summer session and practicum implementation period. The self-evaluation indicated she did not achieve her goal and attributed the lack of accomplishment to the scope of the goal which she had seen as an ongoing one which would have continued beyond the summer.

In contrast to the above example, another teacher, also, chose to work on a goal of increasing developmentally appropriate and child-initiated activities in her classroom.

At the end of the implementation period this teacher reported a successful experience. In her self-evaluation of progress toward an individual professional goal, the teacher commented,

> I think I have begun to achieve my goal to become a master of child initiated integrated program experiences and learning for young children. I discovered my ability to relate to children on their level and still be a guide to discovery and learning.

The progress made by this staff person appears to be consistent with Jones' (1993b) observation that teachers must develop their own understanding of developmentally appropriate practices so that such practices can be applied consistently.

In the area of satisfaction with the level of staff teamwork, there is room for more improvement. Although the stated outcome had been achieved, only 6 of the individuals were very satisfied. One of the factors that may have had a limiting effect on this outcome was the short time span for the practicum. Jorde-Bloom et al. (1991) commented, "Individuals also need time to get to know one another, share ideas and information, and to learn how to work together" (p. 159). Based on feedback, the peer-mentor pairings and informal time during training sessions were helpful to some of the staff and less so to others. Staff comments ranged from "The all-staff meeting was a bonding experience!" to a suggestion for "more time getting to know

each other". However, several staff indicated how helpful others had been in providing assistance in the classroom and with curriculum ideas. Opportunities for relationships to develop over long periods of time may be the ideal but shorter time frames often are the reality, as in this practicum situation, with some staff only at the center for the summer program.

The results of the implementation suggest one additional implication. Authors (Katz, 1972; Zeece, 1991) have suggested that teachers can be in different developmental stages which reflect different needs. Zeece suggested that new teachers in a survival stage need "Assurance that what they are feeling and experiencing is not unusual or wrong....They need assurance that they can and will survive" (p.42). This stage seemed to be exemplified by a new teacher's comment, "I remember feeling overwhelmed and a little lost during the first few days". Other staff members illustrated other stages, as with the teacher who discovered that she was comfortable with a child-initiated program.

The results of the practicum suggest that staff inservice training can be structured to fulfil individual professional growth needs and foster positive perceptions of level of teamwork, even within a short time span. However, relationships take time to develop and a longer time frame

could provide increased improvements. The limited time also was a factor in regard to the extent of progress toward individual goals, although the individualized approach was favorably received by the staff.

Recommendations

Several recommendations were suggested by the practicum experience.

1. Structure inservice staff training to provide choices which are responsive to individual needs.
2. Provide training options for different learning styles.
3. Involve staff in planning and conducting inservice training.
4. Provide ongoing inservice training rather than single sessions.
5. Foster teamwork through informal activities and peer-mentor pairings.
6. Empower staff to define and pursue individual professional growth goals.

The writer will continue to implement the recommendations within the work setting. Returning and new staff for the fall semester have been matched for peer-mentor pairs. Staff will continue to have input and participate in training sessions. Inservice training will be ongoing throughout the year. In addition, each individual will be encouraged to select and pursue an

individual professional growth goal.

Dissemination

The writer plans to submit a proposal to participate as a presenter in a local conference for early childhood educators. The topic for presentation will be based on the practicum. In addition, the writer will explore the possibility of submitting an article for publication which discusses the practicum results.

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APPENDIX A

SUMMER INSERVICE TRAINING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Summer Inservice Training Needs Assessment

Please complete this questionnaire and return by February 26, 1993. This information will be used in planning summer inservice, 1993. The goal is to provide inservice training which will best meet your needs.

Name:

I. Check the 6 areas on which you would like to receive more information as part of inservice training and rank order them (1-6), with 1 being most important to you and 6 least important.

_____ Orientation to job responsibilities and to center
_____ Developmentally appropriate activity planning
_____ Outdoor and nature activities
_____ Judaic curriculum
_____ Positive discipline
_____ Class management
_____ Observation techniques
_____ Assessment of developmental levels
_____ Staff team building
_____ Children with special needs
_____ Emergency procedures
_____ Kitchen procedures and Center kashruth policies
_____ Field trip planning
_____ Special event days
_____ Rainy day planning
_____ Nap time and quiet time activities
_____ Communicating with parents
_____ Playing with children
_____ Health procedures
_____ Safety procedures
_____ Room set-up
_____ Recognizing child abuse and/or neglect and legal responsibilities to report

II: Please answer the following questions. If more space is needed, please use the back of this page.

1. What other topics do you think need to be included?

2. What previous work experiences have you had at the preschool level? (Include type of setting, positions held, and time in position)

3. Have you completed, or are you presently enrolled in, educational studies or professional development in early childhood education or a related field? If yes, what kind of program? Indicate whether completed, or your progress to this point.

4. Have you participated in other inservice training programs? If yes, identify the highlights (describe or define) that were most meaningful for you?

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APPENDIX B

INSERVICE EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Inservice Evaluation Questionnaire

Name: _____

Date: _____

1. Please indicate your degree of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with inservice training, using a scale from 1 to 4.

1=very dissatisfied
2=moderately dissatisfied
3=moderately satisfied
4=very satisfied

a. The information provided about:

_____Judaic curriculum

_____developmentally appropriate activity planning

_____positive discipline

_____orientation to job responsibilites and to the center

_____team building

_____field trips

b. _____The level of staff teamwork

2. What aspects of inservice training were most helpful to you?

3. What was least useful?

4. What changes would you like to see?

APPENDIX C

CONTENTS OF INSERVICE MANUAL

The following information was included in the summer inservice manual.

Summary of duties of head teachers and assistants

Information on required employee records

Payroll information

Map of building

Parent handbook

Staffing schedules

Group lists

Playground schedule

Fire drill procedures

Emergency evacuation procedures

Procedures for tornado warnings

Emergency first aid procedures

Health and safety procedures, including universal precautions for infectious diseases

Attendance sheets

Accident report forms

Procedures for the first day of each session

Procedures for signing children out

Kitchen procedures and forms to request cooking supplies

Playground rules

Weekly planning sheets

Curriculum ideas

APPENDIX D

INSERVICE TRAINING SESSIONS

Inservice Training Sessions

Session 1:

6:00-7:00 All Staff. Introductory team building activity, based on suggestion by Jones (1986). Potluck Supper.

7:00-7:30 All Staff. Pool Safety Orientation.

7:00-9:00 Small Groups:

1. Essential Procedures and Job/Center Orientation.
2. Team Building, Personal Goals and Communication with Parents.
   a. Activity from The Anti-Ordinary Thinkbook (Neugebauer,1991).
   b. Training videotape: Partnerships with Parents (Jones, 1989).

Session 2:

6:00-7:00 All Staff: Brown bag Supper. Review playground and swim safety.

7:00-8:00 Small Groups:

1. Introduction to Judaic curriculum, for new/inexperienced staff. Presenter: Judaic consultant.
2. Program planning and developmentally

appropriate practice. Activity from The Anti-Ordinary Thinkbook (Neugebauer,1991), and brainstorming.

8:00-9:00 Small Groups:

1. Integrating Judaic curriculum into daily programming, for experienced staff. Presenter: Judaic consultant.
2. Program planning and developmentally appropriate practice, for new/inexperienced staff. Training videotape: Curriculum: The Role of the Teacher (Jones, 1988a).

Session 3:

6:00-7:00 All Staff: Salad bar supper. Reveiew of administrative information.

7:00-8:00 Small Groups:

1. Positive Discipline and Class Mangagement, for new/inexperienced staff. Presenter: psychological consultant.
2. Field trip and rainy day planning.

8:00-9:00 All staff: Scheduling of playground times and sings.

Team groups: Planning for special event days.

APPENDIX E

SUMMARY OF INSERVICE SESSIONS

Summary of Inservice Sessions

Session 1: Team Building

Several suggestions were made during the discussion. These included:

1. Give positive comments to others.
2. Recognize others' accomplishments.
3. Provide SUPPORT.
4. Show concern for others.
5. Provide for staff comforts.
6. Offer to listen: Do you want to talk?
7. LISTEN.
8. Be caring.
9. Humor helps.
10. Say "hi" and your name to new staff.

Session 2: Program planning and developmentally appropriate practices

7:00-8:00 group of experienced staff:

The descriptors of what we would like to see in our rooms included: calm, bright, cheerful, creative, busy, loud, developmentally appropriate, clean, cooperative, warm, inviting, colorful, safe.

Stated goals included: Happy, fun, safe, healthy and developmentally appropriate.

The discussion of projects and arts elicited the following contrasts:

Projects are: planned, take time, goals established by teacher, teacher-directed, uniform, product oriented.

Arts are characterized by: creativity, glue, open-ended process and results, child-directed, exploratory, process oriented.

8:00-9:00 group of new or seasonal staff:

Suggestions from the discussion of what we would like to see in our rooms included: organized, bright, happy, safe, inviting activities, staff interaction with children, child-directed learning.

Stated goals included: help each child's self-esteem, fun, socialization, hygiene and self-help skills, encourage problem solving, developmentally appropriate.

Both groups discussed webbing and brainstorming as techniques to expand program planning into diverse activities.

Colors: movement, books, color day, mixing colors in water and playdoh, science, toys, cooking, sorting, songs, language activities such as show and tell.

Fish: water play, playdoh, books, movement, songs and fingerplays, seascape, live fish, fishing.

Session 3: Field trips and rainy days

Both trips and rainy days require advance planning. Suggested activities include:

Arboretum: nature bags-make in advance of trip from felt, paper plates, plastic bags, and gather nature things, make nature book, bird watch, find bugs, make imprints of animal prints, rubbings, stories about Native Americans, nature or animals, leaf pictures and bookmarks. Bring water bottles.

Park: stake claims, pan for gold, paint rocks for treasure hunt, horseshoes, train, vests, horses, races.

Rainy days: indoor picnic, dramatics, tents, puppets, pretending, music and movement, art, cooking, sing, rainbows.